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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 OTTAWA 003580

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AS](#) [CA](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SL](#) [UK](#)

SUBJECT: QUAD MEETING ON SRI LANKA IN OTTAWA

Classified By: POLMINCOUNS Brian Flora, reasons 1.5 (b) (d)

11. (C) Summary: A Quad meeting was held in Ottawa November 29 on Sri Lanka on the margins of scheduled meetings on Bangladesh and Pakistan. The participants expressed concern over the downward spiral in the peace process and slackening international attention to Sri Lanka. The participants agreed on four action items: 1) Coordinate messages and declarations from capitals in order to give them more weight and consistency; 2) Refresh the Co-Chair process; 3) Coordinate on the listing of LTTE as a terrorist organization; and 4) Hold another meeting in the spring at the DG or above level. End Summary

12. (SBU) Poloff attended the Quad meeting on Sri Lanka November 29 hosted by Canadian Foreign Ministry South Asia Deputy Director Glen Hodgins on the margins of the scheduled meeting on Bangladesh. Other attendees included Australian DFAT South Asia Director Peter Howarth and UK FCO South Asia Director Anthony Stokes. The meeting was held largely at the behest of Howarth, whose wanted to maximize his being in Ottawa after travel from Canberra.

VIEW FROM CANADA

13. (C) Hodgins began with an overview of Canada's interest in Sri Lanka, which is centered on the 200,000 strong Tamil community here, much of which comes from LTTE controlled territory. Hodgins said Canada is concerned the peace process has gone off the rails and sees a self-destructive downward spiral, with "internal inertia that will soon be beyond self-correction." He referred to a "criminal inability to work things out," in large part, because people in the South "haven't suffered enough." The Sinhalese were relatively unaffected by the conflict and in some ways benefited from it, Hodgins said, while the Tamils have suffered much in the last 20 years and won't agree to a settlement without a large payout.

14. (C) Hodgins said the GOC is concerned with the "de-internationalization" of the conflict. The Tokyo Co-Chairs, he said, have outlasted their utility and "no one pays attention to them any more." Canada has been engaged in the peace process since the Oslo discussions in 2002, largely through the efforts of former Ontario Premier Bob Rae and the Forum of Federations which he directs. Rae and the Forum spent a good deal of time advising LTTE negotiator Tamil Cheldun and others on the federalism issue, but the Sri Lankan government negotiators were cool to the concept, understanding it as a simple devolution of power.

15. (C) Hodgins spent a good bit of time explaining Canada's position on the listing of LTTE and emphasized that Canada has been unfairly judged over the issue. He said Canada listed the LTTE as of 7 November 2001 as part of the UN Suppression of Terrorism motion. Since the mid-90's the GOC had not allowed LTTE members entry into Canada. He noted Britain went further in banning membership altogether, but added that Canada cannot legally do this because of its Charter of Rights.

16. (C) Stokes asked whether there was an issue with listing the LTTE under Canada's criminal code in addition to the UN listing. Hodgins responded that policymakers are debating the issue, but have been unable to reach consensus on which activities to criminalize and what would be considered facilitation of criminal or terrorist activities under the law. Part of the problem, he said, is that this would involve criminalizing activities that are currently legal, which would be poorly received by Tamil constituents so unlikely to get through Parliament. The new government could revisit LTTE policy, and certainly a Conservative minority government would be more inclined to take a more hard-line position. Toward the end of the meeting, when listing was suggested as one of the four key issues to come out of the meeting, Hodgins went further, saying "it is only a matter of time on listing LTTE."

17. (C) In terms of a long-term prognosis, Hodgins said he believes there will be a breakdown in the cease-fire and a return to hostilities. In his view, the LTTE would be initially successful, taking the east and Jaffna, but in the long-run they would be defeated. He said the government lacks intelligence, not manpower, and if provided intelligence on Tamil troop movements (e.g. by the U.S.),

would be able to defeat the LTTE. Hodgins suggested that violence could break out as early as six months hence, or the two sides could muddle along for 18-plus months before returning to hostilities.

18. (C) Hodgins suggested that the Quad reconvene in the spring of 2006 at the DG level to discuss Sri Lanka further. He suggested bringing in some outside experts on the peace process to look at what is going wrong and how to move the process further. The key, he believes, will be increasing international support. Stokes and Howarth concurred that such a meeting would be beneficial. Hodgins finally suggested that the "elephant in the room" was Karuna and the split in the LTTE, but lamented that this was something he can't convince the intelligence community to focus on.

VIEW FROM THE UK

19. (C) Stokes said the UK analysis is also that the situation on the ground is getting worse, not better. HMG officials have criticized the LTTE as unhelpful on several issues: first, urging Tamils to essentially boycott the elections (either because the LTTE really did not want them to go forward, or because they wanted to increase their leverage); and second, Balasingham's Heroes Day speech. In short, the UK shares the assessment that there is a downward spiral and wants to keep attention on Sri Lanka in particular so as to find ways to urge restraint. HMG believes it is vital to coordinate, and fully supports the idea of a spring meeting.

VIEW FROM AUSTRALIA

10. (SBU) Howarth asked if it would be possible to add a day of policy discussions to the Quad information exchange in order to talk about strategy. Since the Australian rep will have traveled so far they want to get as much value out of the talks as possible.

11. (C) Howarth said that Australia was greatly disappointed with the election as it had hoped for a better outcome in terms of participation. Some commentators, he said, believe the outcome strengthened President Mahinda Rajapaksa's hand in the negotiations with the Tamils, and wondered if he could yet be the Ariel Sharon of Sri Lanka.

12. (C) Howarth said the listing issue is of great interest to Australia as well. Australia lists LTTE under the UN list but not as a terrorist organization under domestic legislation on terrorism. This was on hold pending the last election, but with the assassination of Kadirigama, it is back on the agenda. He mentioned that Kadirigama's assassination personally affected the FM, since they had had many encounters. The GOA wants to take a more hard-line position on the LTTE, and include criminal sanctions. Howarth said the Sri Lankan diaspora in Australia is somewhat balanced compared to Canada's, which is 90% Tamil. Howarth mentioned the case of an MP whose visa to Australia was held until he signed a statement outlining his intentions and accepting certain restrictions to his activities. Howarth said if the peace process shows no progress, the Australians would consider stronger steps. At present they are focusing on cracking down on fundraising.

13. (C) Howarth said that a strong message needs to be sent to President Rajapaksa, including the possibility of sanctions. Hodgins expressed concern at the word sanctions, for which he didn't think there would be support, but Howarth corrected his intention as being investment restrictions, not formal sanctions (Australia is a leading investor in Sri Lanka).

14. (C) Howarth said the Australian Embassy in Copenhagen, which covers Norway, heard that the Norwegians are thinking about continuing as the lead for the peace process (UK had also heard this; Canada wondered if they weren't looking for a face-saving way to disengage). Hodgins also wondered if it would be better if Norway were not both facilitator and enforcer (head of PKO), but emphasized the importance of outside support for its role as facilitator.

15. (SBU) Stokes suggested that there is a need for refreshed Co-Chairs. Hodgins also believes there is a need to refresh or even extend the Co-Chairs, perhaps a "friends of Sri Lanka" group. He wondered if Switzerland would consider such a role, especially given its potential as a federation and its large Tamil diaspora.

16. (SBU) SA/INS has cleared this cable.

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WILKINS